

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (currently amended): A process for producing a pet food comprising:
mixing a protein source to produce an emulsion;
heating said emulsion above the boiling point of water;
pressurizing said emulsion in a confined pressurized zone;
disrupting the emulsion in said confined pressurized zone to form individual pieces or
chunks of pet food having irregular exterior surface contours;
coloring said ~~emulsion~~ exterior surface contours in said confined pressurized zone by
adhering a colorant to the exterior surface contours; and
discharging said ~~emulsion~~ individual pieces ~~in discrete pieces or~~ chunks of pet food.

Claim 2 (previously presented): The process of Claim 1 wherein said protein source comprises at least one source selected from the group consisting of a vegetable source, a meat source, and a meat by-product source.

Claim 3 (previously presented): The process of Claim 2 wherein said vegetable source comprises at least one source selected from the group consisting of a soy source, a corn source, a rice source, a peanut source, a sunflower source, a linseed source, a canola source, and a wheat source.

Claim 4 (previously presented): The process of Claim 2 wherein said meat source comprises at least one source selected from the group consisting of a beef source, a chicken source, a fish source, and a pork source.

Claim 5 (original): The process of Claim 4 wherein said meat source contains from about 15% to about 25% fat by weight.

Claim 6 (original): The process of Claim 4 wherein said meat source contains less than 15% fat by weight.

Claim 7 (previously presented): The process of Claim 1 wherein the emulsion has a protein to fat ratio of at least 1.5:1.

Claim 8 (previously presented): The process of Claim 1 wherein said emulsion is heated to a temperature between about 104°C and about 118°C.

Claim 9 (previously presented): The process of Claim 1 wherein said emulsion has a moisture content from about 45% to about 80% by weight.

Claim 10 (previously presented): The process of Claim 1 wherein said confined pressurized zone is at least one of an elongated tubular member and a holding tube.

Claim 11 (original): The process of Claim 10 wherein the emulsion is restricted in said holding tube for a predefined period of time.

Claim 12 (previously presented): The process of Claim 10 wherein the emulsion is contained in said holding tube having a pressure above the vapor pressure of said emulsion.

Claim 13 (original): The process of Claim 12 wherein the emulsion is retained in said holding tube under a pressure greater than its vapor pressure until the protein in said emulsion has coagulated to form a firm emulsion.

Claim 14 (canceled):

Claim 15 (currently amended): The process of Claim ~~14~~ 1 comprising disrupting the emulsion mechanically.

Claim 16 (original): The process of Claim 15 wherein said step of disrupting the emulsion comprises using an injector/shredder assembly.

Claim 17 (previously presented): The process of Claim 16 wherein said injector/shredder assembly comprises at least an injector assembly and a shredder assembly.

Claim 18 (original): The process of Claim 17 wherein said injector assembly comprises a means of injecting steam to disrupt the emulsion.

Claim 19 (previously presented): The process of Claim 16 comprising the step of utilizing said injector assembly to inject a negatively charged colorant into the emulsion.

Claim 20 (canceled):

Claim 21 (currently amended): The process of Claim 20-1 wherein said colorant comprises at least one colorant selected from the group consisting of an oil based colorant and a water-soluble colorant.

Claim 22 (previously presented): The process of Claim 21 wherein said colorant further comprises at least one component selected from the group consisting of a flavor and a nutrient.

Claim 23 (currently amended): The process of Claim 20-1 wherein said colorant is negatively charged with respect to the emulsion.

Claim 24 (currently amended): The process of Claim 23 wherein said colorant comprises a water soluble, ~~earmel~~-caramel color having a negative charge with respect to the emulsion.

Claim 25 (currently amended): The process of Claim 20-1 wherein said colorant is capable of adhering to the emulsion without the presence of a binder.

Claim 26 (previously presented): The process of Claim 1 wherein said discharging comprises the step of removing said emulsion from said confined pressurized zone and cutting said colored emulsion in pieces of varying size, shape and color.

Claim 27 (original): The process of Claim 26 wherein said colored emulsion has a moisture content from about 50% to about 65% by weight.

Claim 28 (currently amended): A process for producing a pet food having a layered, meat-like appearance and chunky, irregularly-shaped, individual pieces having a darkened exterior surface to simulate grill marks which comprises:

passing a product mass through a confined processing zone;

disrupting the product mass in the confined processing zone to form individual pieces or chunks of pet food having irregular exterior surface contours; and

contacting at least a portion of the exterior surface contours of the pieces or chunks ~~product mass~~ with a colorant while in the confined processing zone.

Claim 29 (previously presented): The process of Claim 28 wherein said product mass consists of an emulsion comprising at least one source selected from the group consisting of a meat source and dry proteinaceous source.

Claim 30 (previously presented): The process of Claim 28 wherein said product mass comprises less than 15% fat by weight.

Claim 31 (previously presented): The process of Claim 28 wherein said product mass has a moisture content from about 50% to about 65% by weight.

Claim 32 (previously presented): The process of Claim 28 wherein said colorant adheres to the emulsion without the presence of a binder.

Claim 33 (previously presented): The process of Claim 28 wherein said colorant is selected from the group consisting of water-soluble colorants and oil soluble colorants.

Claim 34 (previously presented): The process of Claim 28 wherein said colorant is negatively charged with respect to said product mass to promote adhesion of said colorant to said product mass.

Claim 35 (previously presented): The process of Claim 28 wherein said colorant comprises a colored solution, which comprises from about 30% to about 60% colorant by weight and from about 70% to about 40% water by weight.

Claim 36 (original): The process of Claim 35 wherein said colored solution is injected into said confined processing zone at a pressure that is higher than the pressure inside said confined zone and at a flow rate from about 1% to about 20% by weight of the product mass flow rate.

Claim 37 (previously presented): The process of Claim 28 wherein said confined processing zone comprises a holding tube under a pressure greater than its vapor pressure and the process comprises maintaining the pressure until the protein in said emulsion has coagulated to form a firm emulsion.

Claim 38 (canceled):

Claim 39 (currently amended): A pet food product comprising individual pieces of a food product mass having a base color and a contrasting exterior color that ~~simulated~~simulates grill marks on natural meat that has been chopped into irregularly shaped individual pieces prior to serving, wherein the exterior color comprises a colorant adhered to an exterior surface of the product and selected from the group consisting of water-soluble colorants and oil-soluble colorants.

Claim 40 (previously presented): The pet food product of Claim 39 wherein said pieces consist of a solidified emulsion comprising at least one source selected from the group consisting of a meat source, a dry proteinaceous source and a vegetarian food source.

Claim 41 (canceled):

Claim 42 (currently amended): The pet food product of Claim ~~41~~39 wherein said colorant adheres to the emulsion without the presence of a binder.

Claim 43 (currently amended): The pet food product of Claim ~~41~~39 wherein said colorant is negatively charged with respect to said product mass pieces to promote adhesion of said colorant to said pieces.

Claim 44 (previously presented): The pet food product of Claim 39 wherein said pieces comprise less than 15% fat by weight.

Claim 45 (previously presented): The pet food product of Claim 39 wherein said pieces have a moisture content from about 50% to about 65% by weight.

Claim 46 (previously presented): The pet food product of Claim 39 wherein a minor portion of the pieces has the contrasting color on substantially all of their exterior surface.

Claim 47 (original): The pet food product of Claim 46 comprising a mixture of said pieces with further individual pieces having the single base color on substantially their entire exterior surface.

Claim 48 (currently amended): A pet food product that has an underlying base ~~color~~ color throughout the product and a contrasting exterior ~~color~~ color that ~~simulated~~ simulates grill marks on natural meat that has been chopped into chunky, irregularly-shaped, individual pieces prior to serving, the pet food product comprising a mixture of

- (1) first individual pieces having a single base ~~color~~ color on their exterior surface
- (2) second individual pieces having a portion of their exterior surface bearing the contrasting ~~color~~ color,

a minor portion of the second pieces having the contrasting ~~color~~ color on substantially all of their exterior surface, wherein the contrasting color comprises a colorant adhered to the exterior surface and selected from the group consisting of water-soluble colorants and oil-soluble colorants.

Claim 49 (original): The product of Claim 48 wherein said second pieces comprise less than 15% fat by weight.